Dr. *LUCAS*'s

SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

AT

KENSINGTON, *July* 31. 1698.

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The Christian Race:

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

AT

KENSINGTON,

ON

Sunday the 31th of *July*, 1692.

By *RICHARD LUCAS* D. D.
Vicar of St. *Stephens Coleman-street.*

Published by Her Majesties Special Command.

London: Printed for *Samuel Smith* at the *Princes Arms* in St. *Paul's* Church-yard. 1692.

47:90

The Christian Race:

Deliver'd in a

SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN at *Kensington*, &c.

Hebr. xii. 1.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the Race that is set before us.

TO confront Atheism with the Resurrection of Jesus, and Immorality with the Lives of Saints, demonstrating the Power of God in the one, and of Faith in the other, is a way of arguing, which if it do not Reclaim the Infidel and Sinner, if it

do not utterly silence the Objections of the one against the Truth, and of the other against the Possibility of Religion, must yet needs ruffle and disturb the Conscience of both, and fill it with an uneasie Shame and Fear; but how much more must this way of Reasoning prevail wherever there are any Principles of Natural Religion, or any Seeds of Ingenuity and Probity; wherever there is but a *Form of Godlineß*, or the least Disposition to the Power of it. This is the Method the Apostle here observes, he demonstrates the Force and Virtue of Faith by the insuperable Courage and Patience of such in all Ages as were acted and supported by it: And then well knowing, that the Belief of another Life was established upon a brighter Revelation and fuller Evidence than God had ever yet vouchsafed the World, addressing himself to Christians, as Men who would be ashamed to be out-done by Jew or Gentile, or shrink at such Trials as they had triumphed over, he concludes in the words of my Text, *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses*, &c.

These words contains three Parts:

I. *A Duty.*

II. *Directions for the successful discharge of it.*

III. *Motives and Inforcements to it.*

The *Duty* is, To *run the Race that is set before us:*

The *Direction* consists of Three Rules: 1. That we *must lay aside every weight*; but especially, 2*ly*, *The sin that doth so easily beset us.* 3*ly*, That we must *run with patience.*

The

The *Motives* and *Inforcements* are partly expreſſed in theſe words, *Seeing we are compaſſed about with ſuch a Cloud of Witneſſes*; partly implied and involved in the Metaphorical Deſcription of our Duty, *The Race that is ſet before us*; for this intimates a Crown to be the Reward of him, who ſo runs as to obtain.

Firſt of the *Duty*: The Race of the Primitive Chriſtians conſiſted eſpecially in the Propagating the Kingdom of Jeſus, and ſecuring their own by Sufferings and Blood. And that this is the Race my Text immediately relates to, is plain; it being nothing elſe but an Exhortation founded on the Trials and Tortures in the former *Chapter*, and reinforced by the Example of Jeſus in this, *Who for the Joy that was ſet before him, indured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the Shame.* But if we take this Exhortation in the utmoſt latitude we may, and ſuppoſe it addreſs'd to all Chriſtians in general, then our *Race* will conſiſt in *doing the good which God hath appointed us*, and eſpecially in *ſurmounting whatever difficulty or oppoſition we may encounter in the purſuit of it.*

1. In *doing Good*: The great deſign of Chriſtianity is to multiply our Obligations and Incouragements, and to raiſe and inlarge our Capacities of doing good. The Holy Scripture was inſpired and written that the *Man of God might be perfect, throughly furniſhed to every good work*, and the Holy Spirit is communicated, to relieve the Weakneſſes and Indiſpoſitions of our Natures, and inable us to act the great things which that preſcribes. Illumination fills the Mind of Man with a juſt comprehenſion of the Dignity of his Nature, and the great ends of his Creation. Purification ſets him at liberty to purſue them, and fires the Heart with a holy Ardour and Zeal to do ſo: and Faith ſtrengthens and fortifies him againſt

the contradiction of Sinners and Temptations of the Body. Doing good then is undoubtedly that wherein the Christian Race consists. But it must be

2*ly*, *That Good* which God hath *appointed us*. We must neither *contract* nor *inlarge* the Notion of doing good beyond those Bounds which God hath set us. We must not inlarge it, by placing Religon in those Works which Prejudice or Prepossession, Fancy or Faction, Lust or Passion, not God prescribes: Nor may we break in upon the Rights, or invade the Offices of others, out of a design of doing good. Purity of Intention will hardly expiate Rashness and Presumption; nor will any Good attain'd, compensate the Mischiefs flowing from an Example of so much Injustice and Confusion; nor is it therefore to be wondred at, if such a one meet with the Punishment of *Uzza*, not the Crown of St. *Paul*.

And as we must not inlarge, so we must not *contract* the Notion of doing Good. To which end I must remark to you, That it consists not only, 1. in rescuing the Wretched and Unfortunate from Temporal, or, 2. the Fool and Sinner from Eternal Evil, *i. e.* in rooting out Vice and Errour, and propagating Truth and Vertue, concerning both which there can be no doubt; but also, 3*ly*, In the due Discharge of the Duties of Secular Stations or Callings. The Reason of this is plain; they are all, from the highest to the lowest, in a true and proper sense, appointed of God; they do minister to excellent ends, and proceed from, and are conducted by excellent Principles, *Faith in God*, and *Conformity to his Providence*; and then no wonder if Humility, Faith, and Purity of Intention, transmute Civil into Religious Actions, as the *Elixir* of *Adepts* is said to do inferiour Mettals into Gold. Hence it is that the *subduing Kingdoms*,

doms, and *working Righteousness*, which in the *Ideom* of the *Old Testament*, signifies the protecting and delivering the People of God, the *waxing valiant in fight*, and *putting to flight the Armies of the Aliens*, are recorded by the Apostle *Hebr.* 11. not only as the Heroick Exploits of *Gideon*, and *Baruch*, *Jepththa*, and *Sampson* and *David*, but as truly and properly Acts of Faith, as the Sacrifice of *Abel* or *Abraham*, the Ark of *Noah*, or the Flight of *Moses*. And hence *Eph.* 6. the Industry and Faithfulness of Servants is interpreted, as truly Religion towards God, as Service towards Man, and this upon a ground that Ministers Incouragement to Men of all Conditions and Professions, knowing that *whatsoever good a Man doeth, the same he shall receive of God, whether he be bond or free*: all this put together, as it furnishes us with a just Notion of the Christian Race, so does it with a just one of Christianity it self; he derogates from it, who forms any other *Idea* of it than this, That it is a most effectual and comprehensive Design of advancing all the good Mankind is capable of. As it has its Vertues which adorn the Man, so has it those too which adorn the Prince, the General, the Judge, and so downwards. As it hath its Vertues which perfect and accomplish *Human Nature*, so has it those too which cement and support *Civil Society*: It is is so far from consisting in Modes and Forms, in Heats and Enthusiasm, that it consists not in Mortification it self alone; *laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us*, is in my Text but a Qualification or Preparation to the *running the Race set before us*. Whoever then confines Religion to Private and Solitary Piety, I mean to such a one as is useless to the World, dissolves the Vigour, and impoverishes the Ge-

Generosity of the Christian Spirit. Godliness and Sobriety without Righteousness, would make but a maimed and imperfect Religion; for it is not the Design of Religion to resolve Societies and Kingdoms into *Hermits* and *Monks*, but to purifie and raise them, and make the *Kingdoms of the World the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.*

This is a Design so glorious, so benign and gracious, that one would think, whoever ingages in it, should find every thing easie and yielding, propitious and favourable to him. But alas! if he consider the Corruption of Nature, the Malice of Hell, and Degeneracy of the World, he has reason to expect a very formidable Opposition. In the Conquest of which consists

The Third and most considerable Part of the Christian Race. *My Son*, said *Jesus* the Son of *Sirach*, *Ecclesiasticus* the 2d *Chapter*, and *verses* 1, 2. *if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation; set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble.* Which, if we should suppose him to speak Prophetically, will amount to thus much, Whoever thou art who resolvest to enter the Lists of Christianity, and *run the Race that is set before thee*, dream not of a cheap and easie Victory, thou shalt be encountred with violent Opposition from within and from without. Sloth, or Self-preservation, will solicite thee to ease and rest, why shouldst thou *be righteous over much*, and destroy thy self? why shouldst thou exchange thy calm and security of a quiet private Piety, for the storms and troubles in which thy Zeal and Rashness will imbroil thee? Diffidence or Distrust in God, Impatience under thy own Fortune, or Envy

of

of anothers, will suggest to thee many more effectual and compendious ways to Honour and Interest, than a conscientious, *i. e.* a tame and toilsome discharge of Duty. Sensuality, or at least Lukewarmness, will endeavour to perswade, that it is a Supream point of Wisdom to reconcile the Hopes of another World with the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this; to which if thou listen thou art undone. For this is a Perswasion which shoots a dead Palsie through the very Sinews of Zeal, clips the Wings, and takes down the Sails of Charity. Nor shalt thou be less distrest from without, then from within; the Squadrons of Hell will beset thee round, and Enemies will fall on from every Quarter; there will be *Sadducees* and *Atheists* that will Attaque thy Faith, and tear up, if they can, thy Righteousness by the Roots: There will be *Scribes* and *Pharisees* who will blaste thy good Actions, and aggravate thy Infirmities, either out of hatred to the Communion thou art off, or which is worse, a close and secret Aversion to all Religion. There will not be wanting *Hobbists* and *Herodians*, *Machivilians*, *Craftsmen*, and innumerable others, who will Assault thy Religion consisting in Zeal and Charity; some as Folly, others as a Scandal and Offence; some as Enemy to *Cæsar*, and others as Enemy to Trade. For an humble, modest, and a frugal Religion, will not fail of being Traduced, as menacing the Trade as much as the Sin of a Nation, and as impairing the Revenues, while it prunes the Luxury of a State. Reformation, though it disturbed a vicious World, as the Angel did *Bethesda's* Water, only to work Cures, yet shall it never escape the Rallery and Reflections, the small and great Shot of the Loose and Immoral; and whatever Measures it take,

take, whether it revive old Constitutions, or recommend new, shall ever be branded as Design and Hypocrisie, by all such as thrive and grow fat by Transgressing the Laws of God and Man. Nay more yet, there will not be wanting Advocates of Vice, or Enemies to Vertue, in thine own Train and Family, who will dehort thee from all expensive and hazardous Sacrifices, and indeavour to divert thee, as St. *Peter* would have done our Saviour from the Paths which lead to Trials or Sufferings, to *Gethsemane* or *Golgotha*. Finally, to compleat the Politicks of Hell, thou shalt find the World divided into Factions, Religious and Civil, who will stamp Vice on the most glorious Actions, and Honour and Vertue on Extravagancies and Debaucheries, who will persecute the Truth of God as Heresie and Novelty, and stickle for the Tenets, *i. e.* the Interest of their Parties, as for the Fundamentals of Faith, or Precepts of the Decalogue. And after all, God himself sometimes will withdraw, and seem to abandon and give thee up to the Will of wicked Men, so that thou shalt be ready to cry out with his beloved Son, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.* Here is the Trial, here is the Patience of the Saints. These and many more are the Difficulties thou art to conquer, if thou wilt *so run as to obtain*; and therefore prepare thy self by Mortification and Discipline, and fortifie thy Soul by the wisest Advice, and the most powerful Incouragements, for thou shalt have need of all.

This minds me of my Second General Direction for the Discharge of this Duty, consisting of Three Rules. I begin with the first, that is, *to lay aside every weight*, every corrupt Affection, which like a weight would clog and retard us in our Race. This

This Advice contains several important Truths, as First, That whatever the Disorder or Depravation of Nature be, which we derive from our first Parents, our Destruction is from our selves; and those Reluctancies and Aversions for Righteousness, to which we owe our Ruin, are rather contracted, then Original. 'Tis true, there is a Law in the Body which wars against the Law of the Mind; but then it is as true, that there is a Law in the Mind, which wars against the Law of the Body. The Language of the Body is indeed more soft and insinuating, but that of the Mind more authoratative and awful. The Body, like *Esau*, is the First-born; for as *Job* observes, *Man is born like a wild Asses Colt*; but the Mind, like *Jacob*, comes into the World with a better Title by Divine designation, and a Capacity which soon defeats it of its usurped Possession of the Birthright. The Objects finally of the Body are present and sensible; yet to the Soul, the Glory and Eternity of its Objects make amends for their distance and futurity, and Faith Supplies the place of Vision; for Faith is *the Substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen*, Hebr. 11. 1. So that 'tis evident, the Scale of Victory is not turned on the side of the Body against the Mind, till false Principles have supplanted the Authority of the one, and Indulgence and ill Customs increased and fortified the Propensions of the other to worldly and sensible things. I have remarkt this, that none of us may go about to remove the Guilt of our Ruin from our selves on our first Parents, or God, that none may think we have sufficiently discharged our Duty by accusing our Nature, or excused

our Vices by Arraigning our Frailty. This calls to mind a

Second Truth contained in this Rule, namely, That no Sin is invincible, that none is so deeply rooted in us, either by Nature or Custom, but it may be extirpated. This is an Assertion you will easily admit, if you consider by what glorious Instruments the Conversion of Man is wrought, the Spirit of God, and the Word of God, *i. e.* the Wisdom and the Power of God. Or if you consider the Description of it in Holy Scripture; it is called *the Divine Nature, the New Creature, the Image of God, the Life of Faith,* a being *transformed from Glory to Glory, the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God,* and such like. What Degrees of Perfection all this may import, I enquire not; 'tis plain it can imply nothing less than a Purification from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and through Sanctification of Spirit, Soul and Body. Nor is this a matter of meer Speculation; the Converts of the first Times, were living Demonstrations of this Truth; and their daily Actions were nothing else but the glorious Effects of an intire Victory, not over the Weakest only, but most Obstinate of their Sins. All this inculcates this one plain Lesson, That no Man must think to shelter his Negligence and Lukewarmness, or any Darling Lust, under the pretence of an insuperable Infirmity; or that by owning himself to be but Man, he is excused from being a Christian. The truth is, if Christianity did consist in a Quarrel, only with our Sins, not a Conquest of them, it would be nothing else but a Circulation of Sins and Follies; for Regret and Remorse, which

which doth only disturb, not reform, may be reckoned amongst the Infirmities of Man, and that Repentance which brings not forth Fruit, is it self to be repented of amongst our other Faults. For,

Thirdly, The last Truth I'le observe to you from this Rule, is, That Spiritual Liberty is the beginning of Perfection; that the first step towards doing Well, is ceasing to do Evil; that the Christian must make the first Experiment of his Zeal upon himself; that Reformation and Charity must begin at home: not only that his Attempts of doing good, may have in them their proper Luster and Majesty, their just Authority and Influence; but indeed that he may be qualified and capacitated for making any: for how weak and unsuccessful must his Endeavours be, whilst some wretched Lust takes up his time, imployes the Vigour of his Soul, and alienates his Affection from every thing that is truly Great or Good. Will the Unclean deny the Importunities of his Lust, to satisfie those of his Duty? will the Covetous impoverish himself, (so he styles giving Alms) to support others in Laziness, and yet his Heap of Treasure, like heaps of Soil and Dung, is good for nothing till it is scattered abroad? Will the Proud stoop to the humble Offices which our Crucified Saviour did? will the Soft or the Ambitious run those Hazards, or indure those Hardships which are generally unavoidable in carrying on any considerable Good? or will the Factious cross the Interest of his Party to promote that of his God, I mean that of Religion in General? This abundantly demonstrates how inconsistent every sinful Affection is with Success in our Christian Race,

and consequently how necessary the Advice of my Text is, That we should put it off as a burthen or weight. Nor is this true only of this or that particular Sin, but of all in general, and therefore we must put off *every weight*. *Strive*, said our blessed Saviour, *to enter in at the streight Gate; for streight is the Gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it*. All our vigour, all our strength, assisted by the Spirit of God, will be little enough to open this Way, and storm Heaven. Ah! what can we expect from Affections divided between God and Mammon, or any other Lust? from Strengths scattered and dispersed in pursuit of Vice as well as Vertue? and these deserted and abandoned by the Spirit of God; for *the Holy Spirit of Discipline will fly Deceit, and will not abide when Iniquity cometh in*, Wisd. 1.

But though all Sin in general obstruct the Christian in his Race, and defeat him of his Crown, yet none so fatally as the beloved one: And therefore 'tis against *this*, against *the sin that easily besets us*, that the Apostle in his second Rule awakens all our Jealousie, and Summons all our Courage; this being the Sin in which especially lyes the strength of Satan, and in the Conquest of it the first, and I think I may add the greatest Difficulty of Christianity.

To illustrate therefore this Advice of the Apostle, I'le first shew what it is, and then secondly, how to cure it.

First,

First, What it is; As in the Humours of the Body, so in the Vices of the Mind, there is one Predominant, which is this, ἁμαρτία ἐυπερίστατος, it has an Ascendant over us, and leads and governs us; it is in the Body of Sin, what the Heart is in the Body of our Nature; it begins to live first, and dies last; and whilst it lives it communicates Life and Spirit to the whole Body of Sin, and when it dies, the Body of Sin expires with it. It is the Sin to which our Constitutions leads, our Circumstances betray, and Custom inslaves us; the Sin to which, not our Vertues only, but Vices too, lour their Topsail and submit; the Sin, which when we would impose upon God and our Consciences, we excuse and disguise with all imaginable Artifice and Sophistry; but when we are sincere with both, we oppose first and conquer last. 'Tis, in a word, the Sin which Reigns and Rules in the *Unregenerate*, and too often Alarums and Disturbs, ah, that I could say no more, the *Regenerate!* Having thus fully discovered what this Sin is, without vexing and torturing the Text by Criticisms, I'le now proceed secondly, to shew you how to conquer it.

First, Indeavour to possess your Souls with a true Notion of Sin in General, but especially of this beloved one in Particular; Falshood and Folly, Levity and Inconstancy. Cowardize and Ingratitude, and all that is base, constitute the very Essence of Sin. As to the Effects of it, it dishonours, and as much as in it lies dethrones God, disturbs and embroyls Human Society, depraves Nature, perverts the true ends of Life; and for

for all these Reasons will one day bring down all the Storms of Eternal Vengeance upon the Guilty and Impenitent Soul.

This is a true Notion of Sin in general, and let nothing ever tempt us to softer Thoughts of our *beloved* Sin: The same baseness gives it being, and though its Effects may not be so injurious, as those of some other Sins, either to the Honour of Religion, or the Interest of Man, yet they will be no less fatal to *thee*. This Sin is like some Diseases, which though they seem contemptible in themselves, are always deadly to some Families and Constitutions: But can that be a little Sin, which creates us the greatest Trouble, Threatens us with the greatest Danger, and Intangles us in the greatest Difficulties? Is that a little Sin which has so often overthrown our Solemn Vows and Resolutions, robbed us of our Peace and Hopes, and fill'd our Souls with Remorse and Shame? Is that a Sin to be despised which the weightiest Reasons, the clearest Convictions, and warmest Impressions of the Spirit do often fail to conquer? Is that finally a Sin to be shelter'd and excused which bewailed, condemned, renounced, detested, baffled, broken, routed, often r'allies and renews the fight, and recovers for a time its former Dignity and Authority? Certainly, did we Morning and Evening seriously reflect upon the strength and mischief of this our favourite Sin, of which each Man ought to have a Catalogue by him, we should, whenever tempted to it, tremble and grow pale at the Temptation, and fly back with the horrour of *Joseph*, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* But after we have done all

all this, we muſt take as much pains to preſerve, as we did to imprint this Notion in our Souls; we muſt not ſuffer our Reaſon to vary with our Pulſe, and our Reſolutions to change with our Company, Fortune, Temper, Humour; otherwiſe we ſhall ſoon pull down in an Hour of Gaiety, what we built up in many ſober ones, and a fit of Pleaſure and Jollity will deprive us in a moment of the Fruit of many Prayers, Reflections and Meditations. And becauſe we are very liable to this, therefore

Secondly, We muſt frequently renew our Reſolutions againſt it: And theſe Reſolutions muſt *firſt* be levelled, not only againſt this Sin, but all Appearances of, and Approaches to it. What is Cruelty in Princes, is Piety in Penitents; the Expreſſion of our Diſpleaſure muſt light, not only on the Criminal it ſelf, but on all its Friends and Relatives. We muſt deal with this Sin as *Iſrael* was obliged to do with Idols, not only reduce the Idol it ſelf to Aſhes, and bury it in a Stream of Repentant Tears, but cut down its Groves, dig up his Altars, ſlay its Prieſts, and deface whatever might tend to preſerve or revive the memory of it.

Secondly, Theſe Reſolutions muſt be as well fitted to all Occaſions and Circumſtances as poſſible we can; we muſt conſider what Arts, what Arms this Sin is wont to make uſe of, where our Nature or our Vertue is weakeſt, or moſt expoſed to the Aſſaults of the Enemy; we muſt in one word, neither be ignorant of any Frailty of our own, nor any wile of the Devil, and then

then our Resolutions must be so formed, as to obviate each. Is my Temper Rash and Precipitate, Light and Inconstant? I must resolve to correct it by the Awe of the Divince Presence, by Meditations, on Death and Judgment. Is it slow, heavy and unapprehensive? I must resolve to awaken it by Retirement and Prayer; by entring often into an impartial view of my own state; by Conversation, if I can find that it hath warmth and spirit in it; by the most patherick portions of Holy Writ, and by a frequent Recollection of all those Truths which have Edge and Point in them, or at least have so to me. Is this Sin wont to dart its Infection through the Eye? Is it wont to wound or defile us by the Ear? we must block up these Avenues of Death and Damnation; we must guard the Soul, as God did Paradise with the flaming Sword of an Angel; with that awful Vertue and inflamed Zeal, that Temptations may fly from before us. Thus must we, in a word, oppose Art against Art, and Force against Force, and in our Spiritual Warfare imitate the Wisdom of the Children of this World, who count it unpardonable Errour to be often imposed on by the same Artifice, or betrayed by the same Methods. After all, you must bind these Resolutions on your Souls, by Prayer and Sacraments, and this one particular Consideration,

Thirdly, That nothing less than the Conquest of this darling Sin can gain a Christian true Peace and Liberty. While we retain a Sin that Rivals God in our Affection, neither our Obedience nor Assurance can be sincere or constant; we can have no pleasure in our Reflection on our selves, nor confidence in our Addresses to God. No Man is so wicked, as to be inclined to

to all sins, nor so foolish, as to quit none; 'tis therefore the quitting the *predominant* Sin, which is the best proof of our Integrity; with *others*, we part, as with Civil Acquaintances, when the Visit is done; but with *these*, as with Confidents and Friends, or in the Language of our Saviour, with our *right Hands*, or our *right Eyes*. But when this is done, our Freedom and Pleasure will compensate our Trouble; and Hope, and Joy, reward our Mortification. But then we must take care that we finish, as well as we begin and compleat that Christian Race in Patience, which we began in Mortification. Which brings me to my third Rule, That we must run with *Patience*.

This Rule will contain two or three Things: 1. A Supposition or Insinuation that such as stand may fall; that such as run may faint and grow weary, and so forfeit their Crown.

All the Promises which God makes his People of his Presence and Protection in their Dangers and Trials, are designed to minister Incouragement to the Humble and the Watchful, and must not be perverted to nourish Confidence and Security, or to defeat that Humility, Vigilance, and Circumspection which the Spirit of God in Scripture endeavours, by repeated Exhortations, to beget in every Christian. Our Saviour indeed, when he tells his Disciples, *Matth.* 24. 24. That *there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets*; and then adds, That *they shall shew great signs and wonders, inso-*

much that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very Elect; seems plainly to imply, that it was not possible; but then, without flying to the distinction between the *Faithful* and *Elect*, made use of indeed by St. *Austin*, and some others of the Fathers, whether sufficiently founded in Scripture, or no, I determine not; without flying, I say, to this distinction, this Text may easily be reconciled with those which suppose the possibility of a Righteous Man's Revolt from Vertue; for it is very obvious to any one, that our Saviour speaks not here of the Perseverance of this or that particular Person, but of the Continuance or Preservation of the Christian Church, asserting no more here then what he had done before, *That the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* 'Tis true indeed, some of the Ancients thought that there was a Height or Eminence of Holiness, which when Man had arrived at, he was raised above the possibility of falling. I examine not what Countenance this Opinion had from Holy Scripture, because 'tis, if an Errour, I think at least an harmless one; for the more holy, the more humble; the nearer to Perfection, the more fervent and watchful. But I'le not intangle my self in this Matter, since all I intend to build upon this Doctrine, is only *that* Caution and Circumspection, which the Scripture every where exhorts Christians to, and particularly here in my Text.

Now the Advice of Patience referring to *that* Opposition which the Christian is to Encounter from

from within and from without, we may reasonably conceive it to inculcate these two Things: 1. That we should watch carefully over our selves; 2. That we should bear the shock, and on-set of the World with Constancy and Courage.

First, That we should Watch, &c. Since he that stands may fall, let no Man presume too soon of an intire Conquest, nor grow Secure or Careless, as if past the reach of Danger. When we have put off every old Sin, the Seeds of new ones will remain till we put off the Body; we must therefore continue our Guard and Watch, and use as much diligence to keep the Enemy under, as we did at first to subdue it. It is a wise Example St. *Paul* hath set us, who continued the same Discipline over the Body which he began with; *I keep under the Body, and bring it in subjection, least at any time when I preach to others, I my self may become a Cast-away.* It often happens in the Christian as is doth in Secular Wars, that he loses the Fruit of a dear bought Victory, who makes too much haste to enjoy it. If therefore you will be safe, you must not be secure; be not too soon confident of a Reconciliation with God, nor too hasty to calm the Sorrows, and still the Agonies of an afflicted Conscience; the more lasting the Grief is, the more intire and compleat will be the Victory; the more wakeful and timorous thy Soul is, the more firm will be thy Peace. In this case too forward Joy is like a too forward Spring, whose early Blossoms seldom

come to Maturity and Perfection. Nay, I must put you in mind, That when the Season of this Fruit is come, *i. e.* when Tribulation has wrought Patience, Patience Experience, Experience Hope, Hope raised high on the Wings of Love, Hope inebriated by the Joy of the Holy Ghost, we must even then follow the Advice of the Psalmist, *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce before him with trembling.* Even then our Zeal must increase with our Hope, and our Circumspection and Humility with our Spiritual Pleasure; even then, as if our Work and Duty did increase with our Strength and Capacity, as if the difficultest Task of our Christianity was still behind, or all that we have hitherto done would amount to nothing, if we did not hold out with Patience and Courage to the Goal. We must immitate the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, *Brethren*, *I count not my self to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God which is in Christ Jesus*, Phil. 3. 13, 14.

And you will see this very reasonable, if you consider what this Rule suggests in the *second* place, namely, That we are to meet with much Opposition from the World, which we must bear manfully; nor will these Trials have an end, but with our Lives; nay, often the sharpest are reserved, like Martyrdom, for our last Moments: There-

Therefore the Scripture every where inculcates, That we ſhould not look on Chriſtianity as a ſtate of Senſuality; or project to our ſelves the Pleaſure and the Honour, the Eaſe and Intereſt of Life; but Hardſhips and Labour, Watching, Contention and War: whence it was our Lord did adviſe his Auditors, that before they followed him, they ſhould conſider what they undertook, as wiſe Builders do their Fund before they begin to build, or wiſe Princes their Strength and Proviſion before they ingage in a War. 'Tis true, the taking up the Croſs in a litteral Sence, was a qualification for Diſcipleſhip, more immediately requiſite in thoſe Ages; but 'tis as true, that in bigger or leſs proportion, the words of our Lord are applicable to all, *If a Man will not take up his Croß and follow me, he cannot be my Diſciple.* Whoever will imitate the Life of the bleſſed Jeſus, *who went about doing good*, muſt reſolve to content himſelf with his own Integrity, to deſpiſe Cenſure, to digeſt the Ingratitude of Man, and vanquiſh and weather thoſe Enmities which a ſteddy adherence to Truth and Juſtice, and much more a Zeal for reclaiming Vice, or reviving decayed Religion, will often create him; he muſt ſhrink at no Toil or Hardſhip which an excellent Action will put him to, nor muſt he be diſcouraged by thoſe Baffles or Diſappointments which he will often ſuffer in his moſt Charitable Deſigns. In one word, he muſt always have in his Thoughts the Words of our bleſſed Saviour, *In the World you ſhall have Tribulation, but*

but in me ye shall have Peace; but be of good comfort, I have overcome the World: i. e. he must propose to himself no Peace but from Religion; nor any Comfort from the World, but from the Conquest of it. This, you'l say, is a hard Lesson, who can hear it? Not so hard neither; for where Affliction dwells, there the Spirit of God and Glory dwells too. Trials refine and raise the Faith and Courage of a true Christian, and the overflowing of holy Pleasure, that Joy unspeakable and full of Glory in St. *Peter*, do ever and anon compensate the Toils and Difficulties of his Warfare; and a gracious God has provided Supports and Incouragements proportionable to his Necessities; which is the last thing I am to speak to.

3*dly*, The Motives to this Duty. The first of which is, *We are encompassed with a Cloud of Witnesses*: without considering whether this Expression do suppose departed Saints Spectators and Judges of our Race here below, what I am to remark from it is, That the Apostle lays before us their Examples as undeniable Proof of this Truth, that there does *no Temptation befal us, but what is common to men*, and what has been conquer'd by them too. The *Apostle* has demonstrated this from the Old Testament, and *we* may demonstrate it from the New. The Primitive Times were as bright for their Vertue, as their Miracles, and made as many Proselytes by the one as by the other: How triumphant did then the Strength of Faith, the Ardours

Ardours of Zeal, and the Tenderneſs of Charity appear. 'Twas as much difficulty then to reſtrain the Flights of Faith, and Tranſports of Love within the Bounds of Chriſtian Prudence, as to enkindle them now to any degrees of Decency. Then indeed the Juſt did live by Faith, they acknowledged themſelves to be Strangers, and Pilgrims upon Earth, and ſought no Country but a Heavenly one; then indeed they followed after Righteouſneſs with that Reſolution and Impetuoſity, which ſhewed, that they did really believe they contended for a Crown and Kingdom: But now, alas! our Love of this World vies with their Contempt of it, and our Contempt of Heaven, with their Paſſion for it: Now carnal Prudence eats up our Zeal; Faction conſumes our Charity; the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life deforms our Mortification; diſpirits our Devotion; and every little blaſt of Oppoſition overthrows our Faith. The Atheiſt digs up the Foundations, and the Looſe and Immoral demoliſh the Superſtructures: the one denies the Truth, and the other the Power of our Chriſtian Faith; in one word, we have degenerated to that degree, that there needs as many Miracles to revive and reſtore the Life and Spirit of Religion among us, as ever God has wrought to preſerve the publick Profeſſion of it; and were there not a few Names among us dear to Heaven, I perſwade my ſelf, God could no more endure our Vices, than we their Reformation; and do you think now that in the Day of the Revelation of the righte-

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ous Judgment of God, when he shall render to every Man according to his Works, it will suffice to present him with Excuses, instead of good Works; to urge the Temptation of the World and the Frailties of Nature instead of conquering them; to plead the Hypocrisie of Pretenders, and the Immorality of this or that Ecclesiastick, that is, the Vices of the Bad, instead of imitating the Vertues of the Good; Alas, a Cloud of Witnesses will be produced to baffle this Empty Sophestry, and refute these poor Shifts; and then those Examples which could not here enkindle and excite your Vertue will shame and reproach your Vice, and what could not reform, will then serve to condemn you. But never may this prove the Portion of any one here, but that Crown which is my second Motive.

Had there been any thing more dazling upon Earth then Royalty, the Spirit of God would have described the Felicity of Heaven by it; but since, there is not, he is content to call the Reward of Righteousness a Crown; the State of the Glorified a Kingdom, and themselves Kings and Priests to God for ever: But let not this Metaphor serve to debase our Notion of that State. This is no Kingdom of secret Fears and splendid Troubles, of wakeful Cares, and glittering Dangers: No, 'tis a Kingdom of Philosophy and Love, of Knowledge and Righteousness, of Beauty and Perfection, of Joy and Triumph, of Tranquility and Rest; not bred like that of the Ambitious, sometimes either

either by Satiety, Disappointments, or an Increase of Years, but resulting purely from Security and Extasie. In one word, As God is his own Heaven, so next to that, which results from the Injoyment of him, every one of the Blessed will be a Kingdom to himself, being an Image of God drawn in little. And yet after all this, how little is it of Heaven that we yet know; It's Joys, for ought I know, are as boundless as the Perfections of God from whence they flow. Ages may run by, while we each day survey new Scenes of Wonders, and taste each day new Worlds of Pleasures. Ah! I cannot wonder that such as were possessed with the Belief and Expectation of this State, were willing to quit *Mesopotamia* or an *Egypt* for an Heaven, Nets and Fisher-Boats for Crowns and Kingdoms, Trifles for Treasure, Moments for an Eternity. Ah! did not Lust sully the Idea of Heaven; did not some degree of Infidelity undermine our Belief of it, what Dangers, what Difficulties should we not defie in order to secure it? Did doing Good expose us to as many Reproaches from without, as doing Evil doth from within? were the state of the Righteous as uneasie as that of the Wicked, who are *as the troubled Sea* when it cannot rest; yet what would not a Man do, what would he not suffer, were his Soul fired with the Belief and Hopes of such a Heaven? How much more fearless and active would Zeal be than Ambition? how much more wakeful and indefatigable Charity than Lust or Covetousness, Revenge or Envy,

(Ah! with what Transport would Man pour out his Time, his Treasure, his Strength on this one Design of Doing Good) had he but a Heaven always in his Eye?

Let us then, that we may neither shrink, nor tire through any Difficulties or Hazards which may attend us in this Race of Doing Good, look up daily unto Jesus, till our Faith be turned into Vision; and make Heaven our Meditation, till God make it our Reward: To whom be Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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